

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 011550Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9907

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 8696

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, JO, IS

SUBJ: REACTION TO GOJ-PLO "SETTLEMENT" OR HUSAIN:

WHAT PRICE PALESTINE?

SUMMARY: CAIRO NEWSPAPERS AND MOST OF OUR EGYPTIAN CONTACTS ARE HOPEFUL THAT PLO-GOJ DISPUTE IS, THANKS TO SADAT'S EFFORTS IN RABAT, AT LAST ON WAY TO SOLUTION. ARAFAT IS SEEN AS STRONGER THAN EVER. HUSAIN IS SUSPECTED OF PLAYING SOME DEEP GAME OF HIS OWN. END SUMMARY.

1. INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM RABAT THAT GOJ-PLO RECONCILIATION HAD BEEN ACHIEVED WAS GREETED HERE WITH ENTHUSIASM LITTLE SHORT OF JUBILATION. THERE WAS CONCERN WHEN CONFLICTING STATEMENTS BY GOJ AND PLO REPS IN RABAT WERE REPORTED NEXT DAY, BUT PRESIDENT SADT'S SOOTHING WORDS TO EGYPTIAN CORRESPONDENTS ON OCT 30 (CAIRO 8637) SEEM TO HAVE CONVINCED DOUBTERS THAT SETTLEMENT OF A KIND WAS, IN FACT, ACHIEVED. CAIRO PRESS CONTINUES TO REFLECT SATISFACTION-AND RELIEF-THAT SUMMIT
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ENDED IN ARAB CONSENSUS ON PALESTINE ISSUE. EGYPTIANS SEEM

GENUINELY PROUD THAT SADAT, AS THEY BELIEVE, WAS ABLE TO ACHIEVE THIS CONSENSUS.

2. THE GRACEFUL AND DIGNIFIED MANNER OF HUSAIN'S APPARENT RETREAT HAS, HOWEVER, RAISED MUCH SPECULATION. SOPHISTICATED OBSERVERS HAVE REMARKED TO US, ALONG THE LINES OF PARA 2 OF BEIRUT 13019, THAT THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME SECRET QUID PRO QUO. PERHAPS HUSAIN WAS SIMPLY BOUGHT OFF, THOUGH THE WEST BANK WOULD BE CHEAP AT THE QUOTED PRICE OF \$150 MILLION. OF COURSE THIS FIGURE IS NOT, AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, CONFIRMED FROM ANY SOURCE, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IT REPRESENTS ONLY THE TIP OF A SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL ICEBERG.

3. ON ANOTHER SPECULATIVE TACK, UK EMBOFF TELLS US THAT HE HAS HEARD SUGGESTION FROM MFA OFFICIALS THAT SINCE BOTH HUSAIN AND ARAFAT SEEM TO BELIEVE IN THEIR OWN RESPECTIVE POPULARITY ON THE WEST BANK, THEY MAY HAVE BEEN READY TO SIGN A SECRET MODUS VIVENDI, WITH MENTAL RESERVATION THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES THEY WILL EACH HAVE A LEAST FIGHTING CHANCE OF EMERIGING ON TOP. WHATEVER THE TRUTH MAY BE, WE SURMISE THAT EGYPTIANS WILL READ WITH SARDONIC SMILE KING HUSAIN'S BROADCAST ASSURANCE THAT "WE ENTERTAIN NO AMBITION IN A LAND OR A DESIRE TO RULE OR DOMINATE ANYONE." (AMMAN 6469).

4. IN ANY CASE, MOST EGYPTIANS TO WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN ARE HOPEFUL THAT PLO-GOJ PROBLEM, WHICH HAS SEIZED GOE ATTENTION THROUGHOUT SUMMER, IS AT LAST ON WAY TO RESOLUTION. THEY WILL BE EVEN MORE PLEASED, WE BELIEVE, THAT ARAFAT HAS APPARENTLY EMERGED FROM SUMMIT IN STRONGER CONTROL OF PLO THAN PERHAPS EVER BEFORE. THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE CONCERN HERE THAT PLO DEL IN RABAT WOULD FEEL CONSTRAINED TO MAKE FIERY PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO SATISFY ITS OWN BEIRUT CONSTITUENCY. FROM HERE, HOWEVER, ARAFAT IS SEEN TO HAVE MAINTAINED COMMENDABLY MODERATE LINE IN PUBLIC AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO FEEL IN SUFFICIENTLY STRONG POSITION TO PRESENT PLO TO US TELEVISION VIEWERS DURING UNGA DEBATE IN THE RESPONSIBLE, MODERATE LIGHT WHICH GOE HAS ADVOCATED FOR SO LONG.

5. REAL NUB OF ISSUE IS WHAT SUMMIT'S RECOGNITION OF PLO MEANS FOR ME PEACE PROSPECTS. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT EVEN SOPHISTI-
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CATED EGYPTIANS HAVE NOT FACED UP TO STARK FACT THAT IN VIEW ISRAELI POINTBLANK REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH PLO, ARAFAT'S NEW ARAB STATUS MEANS PEACE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN SET BACK, NOR FORWARD. EVEN SENIOR MFA UNDERSECRETARY IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR GLOSSED OVER THIS POINT. WE BELIEVE THAT ONLY THE MOST SENIOR GOE OFFICIALS HAVE PROGRESSED IN THEIR THINKING BEYOND EUPHORIA THAT PLO AND GOJ HAVE COME TO TERMS-TERMS WHICH ARE DISADVANTAGEOUS TO KING HUSAIN, AN EMPHATICALLY UNPOPULAR FIGURE HERE.

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